

Academician

Dr. Eduardo A. Zancolli (1924-2024)



On May 20, our beloved Master passed away.

First and foremost, I must provide a brief summary of his impressive career, so future generations will understand the true extent of his tireless work and unique professional legacy.

Born in Chivilcoy, Buenos Aires, he graduated as a physician on August 1, 1949, from the School of Medicine at the Universidad de Buenos Aires. He began his career as a concurrent physician in General Surgery at Room VI of Hospital Rawson (Escuela Quirúrgica

Municipal para Graduados), where he had the privilege of learning from his esteemed mentors, Dr. Ricardo Finochietto and Dr. Leoncio Fernandez, who profoundly influenced his entire professional journey.

He then pursued advanced training in Orthopedics and Traumatology in the United States, rotating through the Campbell Clinic (Memphis, Tennessee), Passavant Memorial Hospital (Chicago), Hospital for Special Surgery (New York), and the Rehabilitation Center (Warm Springs, Georgia).

Upon returning to Argentina, he put his knowledge in spine surgery into practice. His tireless dedication to his work led to some friction with Dr. Ricardo, who was concerned about the high number of hospitalized patients. This led to a shift in focus toward treating outpatient conditions, which ignited his profound passion for hand surgery. Any branch of surgery he chose would have been significant, but hand surgery became his true calling.

Remarkably, at just 28 years old and only four years into his career, Finochietto appointed him as the “Chief of the Orthopedics and Traumatology Service” at the Policlínico de San Martín in Buenos Aires. Finochietto clearly recognized the exceptional qualities in this young doctor and supported him in that role.

He later worked at Hospital de Lanús, Hospital Ramos Mejía, and Instituto del Quemado, and was appointed “Head of Unit” of Ward 14 at Hospital Rawson. He then became the “Head of the Orthopedics and Traumatology Service” at the same hospital but resigned in 1977 due to the political and economic turmoil in the country.

Ironically, since 1960, he had already been appointed Honorary Consultant at the Instituto Nacional de Rehabilitación Psicofísica de Buenos Aires [*National Institute of Psychophysical Rehabilitation of Buenos Aires*], where he won the position of “Head of the Department of Surgery” through a competitive process. Here, he developed an Orthopedic Surgery Service with global recognition and began forming his Surgical School, training numerous disciples over time.

He served as Consultant of Orthopedics and Traumatology at Sanatorio Trinidad Palermo (Buenos Aires), Director of Resident Doctors and Consultant of Orthopedics and Traumatology at Hospital Naval “Pedro Mallo” (Buenos Aires), and Consultant of the Hand Service at Sanatorio Finochietto. Additionally, he was a Professor of Orthopedics and Traumatology at Universidad del Salvador (USAL) and Universidad de Ciencias Sociales y Empresariales (UCES), and Honorary Director of the Specialist Program of the AACM.

Among his many academic titles and honors, he was:

Full Member (Site No. 9) of the National Academy of Medicine

Corresponding Member of the Academy of Medical Sciences of Córdoba

Dr. JUAN CARLOS CAGNONE • juancarloscagnone@gmail.com  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4394-2060>

How to cite this article: Cagnone JC. Obituary. Academician Dr. Eduardo A. Zancolli (1924-2024). *Rev Asoc Argent Ortop Traumatol* 2024;89(4):440-441. <https://doi.org/10.15417/issn.1853-7434.2024.89.4.1999>

First President and Founding Member of the South American Federation of Hand Surgery and the Argentinean Association of Hand Surgery (FSCM-AACM)

President of the Argentine Association of Orthopedics and Traumatology (AAOT)

President of the Argentine Congress of the Argentine Association for the Study of the Hip and Knee (ACARO)

Master Surgeon of the Enrique and Ricardo Finochietto Municipal Surgical School for Graduates in Orthopedics and Traumatology (AAOT)

Master of the Anatomy of the Locomotor System (Cabal)

Corresponding and Honorary Member of Orthopedic and Traumatology Societies in the USA, Venezuela, Peru, and Costa Rica

Corresponding and Honorary Member of Hand Surgery Societies in the USA, France, South Africa, England, Spain, Chile, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Venezuela, Australia, Uruguay, and Brazil

Visiting Professor at New York Hospital (USA), Cornell University (USA), Stanford and Irvine (California, USA), Louisville (USA), Australian Society for Surgery of the Hand Congress, and Harvard Medical School (Boston, USA).

He gave, by invitation, 161 lectures abroad and 210 in Argentina, and published 142 scientific articles in the specialty, with 9 awards received.

He delivered 161 lectures abroad and 210 in Argentina, and published 142 scientific articles in his field, receiving 9 awards. His books, including *Bases estructurales y dinámicas de la cirugía de la mano* (two editions out of print), *Atlas de anatomía quirúrgica de la mano* (English and Spanish), and *Anatomía quirúrgica de la mano. Atlas ilustrado*, reflect his lifetime commitment to medicine and his selfless desire to help others.

His true legacy, however, extends beyond scientific achievements. He imparted broad and wise teachings through his example in various aspects of his life. As an exemplary father, he and his inseparable Aurora built a family grounded in strong ethical and moral principles, demonstrating unique solidarity that embraced everyone around them in times of need.

Their refined genetics, honed by their own sacrifices, are evident in Eduardo Rafael and Eduardo Pablo, who follow in their footsteps with full recognition from the medical community.

A tireless worker and reader, he often remarked that “the weekend was for studying,” which is why many Sunday mornings found him dissecting and drawing, driven by a passion for understanding anatomy. His dedication to learning and teaching was shared with his friend Elbio Cozzi.

His quest for knowledge and discomfort with the unknown fueled his progress. He believed that “classifying diseases was a way to discover what was missing.” He emphasized that “when faced with different therapeutic methods with equal results, the simplest was the best,” a principle that simplified methods and demystified skill.

His respect for his colleagues and the profession was based on recognizing merit without bias. His humility and the focus on patient welfare were paramount. This approach allowed him to share his knowledge generously, particularly with younger colleagues, teaching them to draw as a way to learn surgery, and assuring them that “whoever knew how to draw could learn how to operate.”

His primary concern was to teach us to think creatively and strive to “operate in a state of Grace,” free from preconceptions and always pushing the boundaries of what is known. This characteristic was evident in both his work and that of his disciples.

In closing, I hope this remembrance reflects the sentiments of many who wish to pay their respects.

As Dr. Ricardo Finochietto once told a young Julio Taleisnik, “You see that boy who is studying there? He is Dr. Eduardo A. Zancolli. Remember that name... He will be one of the greatest Orthopedists in the world.” Clearly, Finochietto was right.

Rest in peace dear Maestro, task accomplished.

*Dr. Juan C. Cagnone
Sanatorio Finochietto
Autonomous City of Buenos Aires*